

QUEER SECT WATCHING FOR MILLENNIUM'S DAWN

"Israelites." Under the Leadership of Benjamin and Mary, Gathering at Benton Harbor, Mich., to Welcome Christ.

RETURN FROM HEAVEN EXPECTED ANY DAY

The Year of 1916 Fixed as the Time When Christ, Aided by "Israelites," Will Begin His Thousand Years' Reign Over the Earth—Other Peculiar Tenets of Their Faith Are Celibacy, Vegetarianism and Unshaven Locks and Beard.

Benton Harbor, Mich.—A half truth is always dangerous. A strange mixture of truth and error has brought a large company of people together in this city in preparation for the second coming of Christ, and the inauguration of the millennium.

Benjamin and Mary, the long-haired prophet and prophetess of these Israelites as they call themselves, for they claim to have discovered themselves as one of the lost tribes, can quote you the Scripture which would seem to justify their ideas, for the many peculiarities of their faith are taken from the Bible.

So does howie use the Word of God, for he bases all his strange claims upon the teachings of the Sacred Book. So does Mrs. Eddy use or misuse it, finding, as she believes, teachings which have given the world Christian Science. So have scores and hundreds of other people in this day and in days gone by used God's Word to bolster up their peculiar ideas of religion.

It has been said that it is possible to go to the Bible and find something authority for any faith or practice which distorted or diseased human mind or heart could want. And it is also true that no matter how absurd or pernicious a doctrine one may advance, there are always people to be found who will accept and follow it as the truth.

But we did not start out to deliver a lecture on the use and misuse of the Bible, but our purpose is to tell the story of the colony of the House of David, formerly known as the "Flying Rollers," or the "Holy Rollers," as clearly and fairly and fully as possible, believing that the story will prove interesting as well as instructive. But we wanted to emphasize the fact that the doctrines which the "Israelites" believe and teach find their seeming justification in the Bible. Certain truths are taken from their prophecies and into other their own interpretations are read, so that we find a strange jumble, a confused mass of truth and error, and, as we have already said, a half truth is always a dangerous truth.

Millennium Coming.
The "Israelites" believe that the end of the present age will come in 1916, and

angels, the messengers sent by God to the inhabitants of this world. And this is how they figure it out.

The Seventh Angels.
Benjamin and Mary are the seventh from Johanna Southcott, the English woman who founded the strange sect more than a century ago. She was said to have succeeded in interpreting the "Flying Roll," spoken of in the book of Revelation, or the apocalyptic of St. John. Of course, before interpreting she had to find it, as St. John merely saw it in one of his visions, and he failed or neglected to translate it. But the English woman saw it again. She not only saw it. She read it. It was in the vernacular of "old merrie England" and she succeeded in copying it into terse and vigorous English. She was the first "messenger" of a new faith. After her came three other messengers. Then came John Wroe, who was the fourth messenger, and next came the somewhat famous James J. Jezreel. Benjamin, therefore, is clearly the seventh in descent. But he alone of the seven messengers is to have the crowning glory of an immortal body, for Benjamin is the last of the "messengers" and it has been determined that he "shall see the millennial age and Christ, its only ruler," and that after 1,000 years on earth he shall ascend into Heaven with the entire host of the 144,000 to be numbered among the elect.

It is the teaching of Benjamin that with the exception of Christ, Elias, Enoch and a few more of the celebrated Scriptural personages, the 144,000 constituting the elect, with Benjamin himself at their head, shall be the only human beings whose physical bodies will ever be found in Heaven. The "souls and spirits" of all the other inhabitants of earth, from the beginning to the end of time, may ascend into Heaven, but their bodies will stay forever in their graves or somewhere in the universe, or in chaos, as physical, material substance. When the Bible extends the promise of a resurrection of the body at doomsday it is not the real body but the "spirit" which will rise, the Israelites say, from the graves of mother earth. The spirit, not the body, is what is

scheduled to arrive in 1916. But this appears to have been a sad mistake. It is the "end of the world," or, more accurately speaking, the end of the "present order of things," that is timed to arrive in 1916. The change from the present order to the holy reign of Christ during the millennium may require some time for inauguration, say Benjamin and Mary.

They are emphatic in declaring that the "end of the present order" will take place in 1916; that in that year the Christ will have successfully launched the millennium, and that thereafter He will reign and govern for 1,000 years as the acknowledged sovereign and ruler of all the earth.

They assert that the presence of the person of Christ may not at first be recognized by any but the few, and that He may be some years on earth before He will make manifest His identity with the stupendous miracles foretold in the Scriptural Book of the Revelations. Here is where the Israelites have the advantage of the rest of us—they expect that Christ will make Himself known to them first, as they say that He will know they have thoroughly fitted themselves to receive Him and accept His Divine leadership on earth.

Strict Celibates.
In reference to their system of celibacy, Benjamin and Mary have this to say:

"Our institution of celibacy is not the race suicide the American president condemns. The teaching as well as the practice is this. When a person discovers that he or she is one of the number chosen to await the second coming of Christ—the visitation appointed for 1916 or soon before that time—that person is expected forthwith to adopt the mode of life of a celibate, so as to be of that noble purity of mind and body that can alone be deemed fitting and worthy in all who are preparing to greet the Redeemer on His second advent upon this earth. If the persons who accept this call to the holy life have been married and have had children there is no harm done. All that is required of them is that they become celibates when they join our movement and that they remain true celibates thereafter to the end.

"It is easy to see how different is this from the race suicide condemned by your great president. In the first place, we hold that after the end of the present order, which event is to take place in 1916, it will be found that it would not have made much difference whether the present inhabitants of the world had race suicide or not, provided the race suicide had been accomplished by the lawful abstention known as celibacy. For with the inauguration of the millennium, under the glorious rule of Christ, there will be a transformation of the human body that will render it immortal. By the exercise of His Divine power at His second coming the Christ will cause the blood in our bodies to become transformed into spirit. This replacing of the blood with spirit will render the body immortal. Only in this way can the body be saved. It was the way in which were saved the bodies of Enoch, Elias and Elisha, who, without suffering the ordeal of death, ascended gloriously into Heaven.

"It is our belief that when Christ inaugurates in 1916 His glorious reign of the millennium He will find here on earth, but especially in Benton Harbor's House of David, the Israelite remnant described in the book of David as the 144,000 that shall constitute the elect. These, because they have faithfully awaited His second coming, will escape death. Their bodies will become immortal and they shall rule jointly with the Redeemer until the millennium ends with the destruction of the earth. Then they shall ascend with Christ into Heaven, where, because of their Christlike and perfect bodies, they shall sit nearest to the heavenly throne and be "greater than the angels," even as in the Scriptures Christ Himself is said to be greater than all the host of angels and seraphs and cherubim."

There were added by another of the Israelites, a matronly lady known as "Mary II." She was formerly Mrs. Mary MacDermott, of Los Angeles. But she left a comfortable home and a happy family to take up the Israelite's life of abnegation and vigil at Benton Harbor. She said:

"We will not depopulate the earth with race suicide practices like celibacy after the millennium is inaugurated. On the contrary, the Israelites—that is to say, the elect or the people engaged in this movement of ours—will then populate the earth with immortal beings. We believe that our celibacy saves possible children from possible suffering. What's the use of having children now, if the world, as at present constituted, is to come to an end in 1916?"

Preaching in Many States.

Disciples of Benjamin and Mary are now preaching their cult in many states of the union, especially in the south and southwest. The disciples travel in "prairie schooners" overland and preach out of doors in city, town, village and gulch. Chicago has been let alone so far. But it will not be for long, as extensive plans are now being made for a descent upon that metropolis, where the devil is supposed to be well entrenched.

The colony of "Israelites" is located about a mile outside of this town, and it is the mecca to which the "remnant," or the "lost tribes of Israel," are turning in these days, that is, according to the statement of Benjamin and Mary.

A company of 80 Australians recently arrived after a long two months' pilgrimage by way of the Suez canal and England. They claim to be one of the lost tribes. The patriarch of the party is William G. Bulley. He is 70 years old and has been an "Israelite" or "Holy Roller," or "Flying Roller," as they are variously known, for 34 years.

"I went to Australia with nothing but my grip in my hand 60 years ago," he said, "and have seen the movement grow. We were not so far advanced as the Benton Harbor branch. We obtained

a dispensation from the nin angel, or messenger, John Wroe. As soon as Mary and Benjamin came to us we recognized they were possessed of divine power and we left all to follow them."

The Colony.
The colony buildings comprise a group in which the members of the cult are housed and fed and employed. The largest of the frame structures is the administration building which stands in the center. There is a carpenter shop, a bakery, the kitchen, where the vegetables and other food, exclusive of meats, are cooked, for the Israelites among their peculiar tenets hold that vegetarianism is the only dietary pathway along which the elect of God should walk, and so the flesh of beast, bird and fish is barred from the colony with as much rigor as ordinary people would observe in guarding against smallpox or other scourge.

But what they lack in meats they make up in vegetables, and on the day that the Australian pilgrims arrived

one young woman whose red hair flange down her back like a curtain of flame and there are several men with hair hanging about their shoulders. Many of the men are both handsome and distinguished in appearance.

In the hall or "Tabernacle," Benjamin is a striking figure as he addresses his followers. On the occasion of our visit he wore a white dannel suit, with white canvas shoes to match. Jewelry that made a great display, although not especially valuable adorned his person. In his shirt front was a magnificent topaz stone, whose saffron tint was dazzling as the speaker swayed and surged on the billows of his vehement oratory. His preaching was ultra-emotional and exceedingly rapid. His object seemed to be to give a bird's-eye view of the peculiar cult of which he is the apostle.

In his delivery of the reasons for the faith that is in him Benjamin touched upon a wide range of topics. His reasoning was not always the most cogent that

Entry of Jesus Into Jerusalem

Sunday School Lesson for Apr. 23, 1905
Specially Prepared for This Paper.

LESSON TEXT.—John 12:12-26. Memory Verses, 12:12. Read all of the chapter, and the parallel accounts, in Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11, and Luke 19:29-44.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Matt. 21:9.

TIME.—Sunday, the morning after the supper at Bethany.

PLACE.—The slopes of the Mount of Olives, in the city and in the temple. Comment and Suggestive Thought.

V. 12. "On the next day." The day following the feast at Bethany—that is, Sunday, April 2, A. D. 30. "Much people." Chiefly Passover pilgrims from many lands. "Heard that Jesus was coming." Ascertained that He was about to set out for Jerusalem, they resolved to attend Him.

V. 13. "Took branches of palm trees." The long leaves of the palm tree are referred to. These trees grew abundantly on the Mount of Olives, and their leaves were sometimes ten feet in length. "Cried Hosanna." The word "Hosanna" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew words which in Ps. 118: 25, are translated, "Save now, I beseech Thee." It has much the meaning of "God save the king." "Blessed is the King," etc. They recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah, the heir of David's throne, the representative of God, who had come to declare God's favor to His chosen people. The Messiah so long expected by the Jewish people; whose coming had been foretold by any of their prophets.

V. 14. "When He had found a young ass." Other accounts tell that Jesus sent two of His disciples to the near village of Bethphage and borrowed an ass and its colt. "As it is written." By thus doing, Jesus fulfilled an ancient prophecy, Zech. 9:9, which is freely translated in verse 15.

V. 15. "Daughter of Zion." Thus the people of Jerusalem are spoken of.

V. 16. "These things." All the details of this occurrence. The people had no thought that they were fulfilling a prophecy. They simply expressed their hearts' admiration for Jesus in such ways as suggested themselves. "When Jesus was glorified." That is, after His death, resurrection and ascension. "Then remembered." Not until the Holy Spirit came to abide in the hearts of Jesus' disciples, did they fully understand how they themselves had had a part in working out God's plan, and how old-time prophecies had been fulfilled in Jesus.

V. 17. "The people . . . Lazarus." People who dwell in Bethany and Jerusalem. "Bare record." They related again and again to the gathering throngs the wondrous story of the calling to life of the man who had been dead four days.

V. 18. "The people also met Him." This refers to a second company which came forth from Jerusalem to meet Jesus.

V. 19. "Pharisees." Religious leaders who looked on critically, as the triumphant throng entered the city. "Perceive ye?" A word to call attention to the very evident fact that Jesus was in great favor with the common people.

V. 20. "Greeks." They had accepted the Jewish religion and came to worship the true God at the Passover feast.

V. 21. "See Jesus." They had heard of Jesus' wondrous doings, probably had seen His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and wanted to meet Him.

V. 22. "Jesus answered them." He spoke to the Greeks and his disciples, endeavoring to help them see his very heart. "Hour," etc. The long-expected time of His laying down His life. "Glorified." Jesus' true glory was to be shown, not by being crowned an earthly king, but by voluntarily giving Himself up to death.

V. 24. "Corn of wheat." Grain or kernel of wheat. "Fallen into the ground and die." With a grain of wheat as with all the vegetable world, the outer shell of the seed sown in the ground dies, but the little living germ grows and brings forth multitudes of other seeds. If the little grain remained unsown it would never increase. So Jesus, by His death, became the seed of life for all mankind. If He had saved His life He could not have helped or saved us but through His death we are won to love Him, hence to live.

V. 25. "Loveth His life . . . hateth His life." To love life means to "love one's self more than God," to hate life is "to love truth and virtue above one's self."

V. 26. "Serve . . . follow." If one loves Jesus, he will also serve and follow Him, be willing to endure trial and bear shame as He did. "Where I am, there shall my servant." We will have companionship with Jesus. "My Father honor." God will reward as only a great God can. He will compensate for all the pains and losses any may have borne for Jesus' sake on earth.

Practical Points.

V. 12. When we unite with others in services of religious worship, we are likely to meet Jesus.—Matt. 18:20.

V. 14. Humblest things and humblest persons have been chosen of God for highest honor.—Jas. 2:5.

V. 21. Great each immortal soul craves is to see Jesus.—Acts 17:27.

V. 24. It is a great law of the universe that life arises through death.

V. 26. Following Christ Jesus in self-sacrifice for others is the only way of coming with Him into glory.—2 Tim. 2:12.



they had a 16-course dinner for their delectation, all provided without recourse to meats, or meat gravies or soups. And there were cakes and pies and cookies and doughnuts galore. The cooking in the kitchen is all done by steam, the prophet Benjamin having designed the apparatus himself, not busy with his preaching and other duties.

There is a printing department in the colony, and a school, and the "Tabernacle," where the meetings are held. So much for what might be called the plant of this peculiar sect. Now as to the appearance of the members of this colony.

The People.
It is striking, to say the least, no razor or shears are allowed to touch face or head, and both men and women alike wear their hair hanging loose down their backs. The dress of the women is extremely plain, and queer little polka bonnets of straw are worn. The men follow no style or rule in their clothing, the main purpose seeming to be to have something to put on. Some of them wear queerly tilted, flat-topped hats, and most of them have strong intellectual faces.

Benjamin.
Benjamin, the prophet, is a man of about 40 years of age. He was born in Kentucky, but since his early childhood he has been a wanderer. He has visited nearly every state in the union in his travels. He was converted to the new religion about 14 years ago and since that time has been preaching his doctrines. For a number of years he was in Ohio. He came here two years ago with his wife, Mary, who was also born in Kentucky, and she shares with her husband the duties of leader of the House of Israel.

Benjamin is of medium height, rather slenderly built and has an extremely fine face. His hair is of light reddish brown and hangs down on his shoulders in long silken curls. His beard is silken and curly and his features are aquiline and well formed. His complexion is clear, pink and white, and his eyes are blue and clear. His manner is gentle and well bred. His hands are white. Every movement is as of a man at peace with himself and the whole world. He teaches and preaches gentleness and peacefulness and he impresses his personality upon all with whom he comes in contact. He undoubtedly has a wonderful influence over men, for his followers listen to his voice as though it were the voice of deity. They eagerly drink in every word he says and believe implicitly that he has been sent to lead the world into the millennial period.

Mary, the co-worker and assistant leader, is a slender woman, with jet black hair, an aquiline nose, snappy black eyes, and aggressive wide-awake manner. She is a nervous little woman and bears the weight of her duties easily. She shares with her husband all the honors attached to his position and is his constant helpmate. She wears her hair down her back, never uses a hairpin and attires herself in calico except on Sunday, when she dresses well. There are many other believers in the faith in the house on Superior street. There is

could be desired and it would hardly satisfy the "higher criticism." But it satisfied his auditors, few of whom have more than the merest rudiments of enlightened education. They sat there in awe and wonderment, drinking in the saving gospel which they believe came from this man as an inspiration from the Almighty. They did not notice his anachronisms, his poor grammar, his faulty science and his badly-mixed metaphors—or, if they noticed them, their faith was not weakened thereby, but made the more strong, perhaps, because of the unpolished channel through which the gospel of salvation was coming to them in so miraculous a manner.

"Like the waters that cover the sea, our faith will cover the world," was a saying that he reiterated many times.

Believes Other Religions False.

He said that all the other religions "are false religions" and that the greatest of the world's theologians knew not whereof they spoke. The central point in his religious system seemed a revival of the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation. But it was a doctrine that had more than a germ of battery for himself and his followers. It expressed his belief and promise that himself and his followers, to the number of 144,000, were and are simply the "incarnated angels" who participated in the great battle fought between Satan and Michael, the archangel, in Heaven on the occasion of the great rebellion in Heaven.

Some Curious Prophecies.

They say that seven vials of wrath mentioned in the Bible are to be poured out upon the earth in a short time and they look for bloodshed, for disaster and for all manner of evil immediately before the ushering in of the thousand years of peace. It is asserted that those gathered in Benton Harbor will escape all the trouble and wrath and will come out unscathed from the fiery trials to be given the remainder of the earth.

The new city, destined, they say, to be the capital of the world—is to be governed by the son of man; or, in other words, by Benjamin. He is to be the head of the city and he is to have four pillars to assist him. Besides these four, there will be 12 kings, 24 elders and 70 preachers. It will be the duty of the latter to go through all the world and to tell the people what is to come. It was announced that they would not beset out until they receive the power from on high, as Christ is said to have received it, and then when they went they would be able to perform miracles and convert the people rapidly. They are out now over all the land, but it has not been heralded abroad that they have performed any miracles.

Benjamin says that a time will come when there will be a second pentecost. The Holy Ghost will descend upon the people as upon Christ at the River Jordan, and, instead of blood in their veins, the people will have spirit. Then they will be pure and powerful and be able to withstand all manner of temptation and overcome all evil.

Gold Output.

New Zealand's gold output last year was 467,647 ounces, a 900-plus increase.



EDGAR PEISSART

that then will be inaugurated the thousand years' reign with Christ.

They are looking for the return of Christ to earth again at any time now, and because of their peculiar fitness and preparedness he will present himself to them at the Benton Harbor mecca.

The strictest celibacy marks the life of the colony, and this they hold is one of the ways that they will prepare themselves in flesh and spirit for Christ's coming.

The special claims which they make for themselves are that they are the long lost tribe of Israel and that they are the 144,000 spoken of by Daniel the prophet, who shall share with Christ in the rule over the world during the millennial period.

Benjamin and Mary are held as seventh-class messengers, and by messengers they mean the type of messengers spoken of in the Bible—that is to say

sleeping in the grave," they say, "and only the spirit will resurrect, as the body has returned to dust its elements and must so remain," excepting "the one hundred and forty and four thousand" of the elect.

Mission of the Sect.

It is the mission of the "Israelites" to prepare the world for Christ's second coming and to keep a holy vigil until the reappearance of the Redeemer upon earth once more. They assert that "the second coming is due now and may be expected to be made manifest at any moment to all the world."

This is more decidedly startling than anything that the "Israelites," the whilom "Flying Rollers," had announced at any time before. It was understood in Benton Harbor that the "second coming," an event which is to precede the beginning of the millennium, was just 13 years away—that it had been